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Letter dated 26 June 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text of the Declaration of the International Seminar on the Mountains of Central Asia: Problems, Experience and Prospects, conducted at Bishkek from 25 to 28 May 1998 by the Government of Kyrgyzstan, jointly with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development and the Asia Pacific Mountain Network within the framework of preparations for the proclamation of an international year of mountains.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the substantive session of 1998 of the Economic and Social Council, under item 7 (e) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Z. **Eshmambetova**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/1998/100.

98-19036 (E) 020798

Annex

Declaration of the International Seminar on the Mountains of Central Asia: Problems, Experience and Perspectives

The Seminar Participants, having considered and discussed the current situation of the mountainous areas of the Central Asian region, one of Earth's largest global mountain ecosystems, which is of major significance for the sustainable development of the entire world, note with deep concern the rapid and unfavourable geotectonic, ecological, economic, social and cultural changes taking place in the region: erosion and degradation of soils, pastures and other lands and the reduction of biodiversity; non-rational use of hydropower and mineral resources; the difficult economic situation of the population; and the increase in morbidity and mortality. The health-care situation is poor, the mountains are becoming depopulated, and ethnic and cultural skills and traditions are being lost.

The Seminar Participants, in the light of the foregoing, have decided:

1. *To recognize* the vital necessity of constantly and extensively drawing the attention of the societies and Governments of the Central Asian Republics and of the international community to the development problems facing the mountainous areas of Central Asia;

2. *To make the necessary efforts* for the collecting and exchange of information, and the creation and completion of a data bank on the ecological, economic, social, ethnic and cultural trends in the development of mountainous areas and the peoples inhabiting them; to create or facilitate the creation of regional, subregional and interregional information systems on the problems of mountainous areas; and to strengthen their ties with international organizations dealing with problems of the sustainable development of mountainous areas;

3. *To help prepare or promote* the preparation of environmental assessments of mountain systems, the establishment of legal norms and legislation, and the development of comprehensive programmes and projects for the conservation and rational use of the resources of the Central Asian region;

4. *To recognize* the timeliness and importance for the development prospects of the Central Asian region of the initiative of scientists and the Government and President of Kyrgyzstan relating to the proclamation by the United Nations in the near future of an international year of mountains since such an observance and the carrying out of related activities will undoubtedly draw political attention to the problems of mountainous areas and of mobilizing the economic, technical and financial resources of the international community for the sustainable development of those areas;

5. *To participate actively in* the activities of the proposed international year of mountains, and to formulate regional, subregional and national plans for such activities;

6. *To support* the initiative of Kyrgyz scientists for the establishment at Bishkek of a regional information centre for the study of the mountains of Central Asia, and to unite the efforts of Central Asian scientists in organizing the work of the centre;

7. *To recognize as useful* and to support the initiative of Kyrgyz scientists and the Government of Kyrgyzstan for the establishment at Bishkek of an international mountain institute, and to participate actively in its activities;

8. *To take all necessary steps* to strengthen economic and financial support for scientific research, the training of staff and the dissemination of information on the problems and tasks associated with the sustainable development of vulnerable mountain ecosystems;

9. *To recognize* the advisability of introducing the Mountain Settlement Project as the basic model for mountain settlement for the purposes of sustainable development, and to recommend the project for financing;

10. *To recommend* that Seminar materials be published in Russian and English with a view to their subsequent dissemination in the United Nations and other international organizations;

11. *To support* the initiative of the Geographical Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences to include the topic "Mountain geo-ecology and sustainable development" in the Plan of Action of the International Association of Academies of Science, and to request the academies of science of Central Asian States to consider the draft programme and submit their proposals and observations thereon to the programme initiators;

12. *To consider* the advisability of convening annual international seminars on the theme "Mountains of Central Asia: problems, experience and prospects".

Bishkek
27 May 1998